



# Strategies for Addressing Factors Contributing to Underutilization

## 1. Little turnover

- **Restructuring**
- **Budget/Hiring freeze**
  
- *Focus on establishing the foundation: processes, tracking and recordkeeping, training supervisors and employees, setting up recruitment resources, including AA expectations in performance plans, conducting workplace assessment, establishing/expanding diversity program, setting up recognition and rewards program for AA and Diversity accomplishments.*
- *Focus on EEO activities/initiatives. Make sure your employees and supervisors know the difference. Review the “standards” list to assure you are following all of these points in your human resource program.*
- *Review your process for reviewing hiring actions: Does it hold supervisors accountable for justifying exceptions? Are all vacancies covered? If not, is your criteria for exemptions appropriate?*
- *Every vacancy is a potential opportunity; review hiring actions; develop method for ongoing report to management about hiring activities.*
- *Review potential retirements in future months: Do you have a succession plan in place?*
- *Determine strengths and weaknesses in regard to the following:*
  - *Is diversity incorporated into the agency’s vision and mission statements?*
  - *Has a diversity statement been issued by department director?*
  - *Do you have a diversity implementation plan?*
  - *Do you have a diversity council/committee charter?*
  - *Has a diversity policy, directives, etc., been issued?*
  - *Do the department maintain a diversity resource center or reading room?*
  - *Do the department maintain diversity awareness materials and resources?*
  - *Do you provide diversity training?*
  - *Does the department have a formal/informal mentoring program?*
  - *Do the department have an internship program?*
  - *Does the department issue awards and incentives and other recognition?*
  - *Do you maintain communications with the media (newsletter, intranet, etc.)?*
  - *Does the department prepare an accomplishment or status report?*
  - *Are diversity coordinator/contact duties clearly assigned?*

**2. Need for more recruitment/No protected class names on lists**

- **Applicant disinterest/Lack of available protected class applicants**
- **Shrinking labor pool**
- *Build a recruitment network; establish recruitment resources.*
- *See Attachment, "Low-Cost Recruitment Strategies ," for additional ideas.*
- *Follow up on disinterest.*
- *Consider reposting for additional recruitment.*

**3. Positions require highly specialized training**

- **Skills gained internally, tend to promote up**
- *Require new/updated PDQ for all non-routine new hires; review competencies needed.*
- *Challenge this assumption with management staff: Is it still viable? If they couldn't find the skills they need, how would they obtain them?*
- *Where possible, hire behaviors, train for skills; key competencies sought: ability to learn, flexibility.*
- *Develop a workforce plan: Determine key competencies needed, develop an internal skills inventory and conduct a gap analysis to have available and use as feasible.*
- *Establish internal "training" academies.*
- *Establish mentors.*
- *Review promotional patterns.*

**4. Retention**

- **Unable to compete with private sector with salaries and benefits**
- **Protected class hires leave**
- *Establish retention program.*
- *Review turnover for possible trends.*
- *Establish exit interview system if not currently in place; if you have one, review how it is working, follow up with departed employees to obtain their assessment.*
- *Focus on new employees (those in first three years of employment).*
- *Assure probationary employees are receiving at least one performance evaluation BEFORE their six months are up.*
- *Establish mentor program.*
- *Stay in touch with departing employees who may want to return at some future date.*
- *If salary and benefits elsewhere are cited as reasons for leaving, if possible, obtain this data for your HR people.*
- *Ask the departing employee to reconsider; use retention bonus, as feasible.*
- *Utilize existing quality of worklife options to make jobs more accommodating, such as alternative work schedules, family-friendly leave options, part-time employment, telecommuting, dependent care program, Employee Assistance Program.*

- *Establish a climate that supports continuous lifelong learning and development. Use a variety of ways to provide training and development experiences for employees, such as: developing formal/informal mentoring programs, using interactive and on-line training technology, internal training resources (agency experts).*

## **5. Limited number of classes in EEO-4 category**

- *Review EEO-4 category assignment and occupational code with DAS-HRE.*
- *Determine if position(s) is classified appropriately.*
- *Conduct targeted recruitment as vacancies develop; set up recruitment network IN ADVANCE so it's ready to go when the opportunity arises.*

## **6. Working Conditions**

- **Rural areas**
- **Round-the-clock shifts**
- **Travel**
- *Identify positions where working conditions are perceived to be a factor in underutilization, review the job requirements of these positions: Are they necessary? Are other accommodations possible?*
- *Assure that working conditions are really the problem through exit interviews and following up recruitment efforts.*
- *List the working conditions in the vacancy announcement and other recruitment materials.*
- *Utilize your AA/Diversity committees' and current incumbents' insights on how to minimize or work around the perception of these working conditions.*
- *Where appropriate and feasible, compensate or provide other perks for working conditions.*
- *Utilize existing quality of worklife options to offset barriers perceived in working conditions such as alternative work schedules, family-friendly leave options, part-time employment, telecommuting, dependent care program, Employee Assistance Program.*
- *Foster community spirit and a sense of belonging by offering employees vehicles for becoming involved outside the formal workplace in a variety of recreational and volunteer activities.*

**7. Field positions physically challenging**

- *Identify positions where this is purported to be the case. Conduct job analysis. Involve vocational rehabilitation or other disability counselors. Challenge the assumptions.*
- *Consider possible accommodations.*
- *Expand partnerships with state and local experts on employment of persons with disabilities.*
- *Consult DAS-HRE Return to Work Coordinator/Safety Program Coordinator.*

June 2002

Note: Some of the above suggestions have been taken from or adapted from “Building and Maintaining a Diverse, High-Quality Workforce: A Guide to Federal Agencies,” U.S. Office of Personnel Management, ES-DO-05, June 2000.